

Stepping Stones to Perfection (This I Believe)

Accepting defeat is not my forte. Since I was little, I have always treated everything as a competition. From grades, to aesthetics and to every other single little detail, I've got to be a cut above the rest. This made me stubborn as a person, unable to accept playing second to others and unwilling to admit my mistakes. However, since an unforgettable experience two years ago, I have changed, and I am no longer as stubborn and competitive as I have been. It was a painful experience though, one through which I lost my best friend, Elly.

Elly had been my best friend since we were eight. We were in the same primary school, and were classmates for five years. We were lucky enough to get into the same high school and the same class. We each thought that we were the best friends in the entire world and nothing would change. However, something did. And that thing was ME.

When I first came to high school, I felt it was like a jungle. Everything seemed like a competition. A bad grade for a mere assignment could pull down my grades by half. Without good grades, I can't get into good classes. If I can't get into good classes, I would have no future. That was what I told myself every day. I was under a lot of pressure. That was when I started to change.

In the past, it didn't matter whether or not I treated everything like a competition. Everything was so easy. I could get a perfect score in many aspects. So could many others. When it came to high school, I was lucky if I could even get a B in my Language assignment. I got very stressed because often I was not the best in my class. I started behaving differently and Elly, being the closest to me in school, got most of my spite and bitterness. I behaved especially mean to her when her grades were higher than mine. There was one time when I was shouting at her just because her average was better than mine. I was a really bad friend.

Elly and I slowly grew apart, she made new friends, and I started to hate her for her "betrayal". No one could bear my grouchiness, my insensitivity to everyone but me, and my constant comparison of grades. I became the one who was always left out of things. I became the odd one out, the one without any friends. It simply felt like I had just missed the plane going to a luxury island with a free supply of popularity, good

grades and a bright future. Of course, me being me, I blamed my fate on everyone but myself. I think I would have continued living like that if not for my elder sister, Dorothy.

Dorothy is two years older than me and we never really “talked” much. However, she must have noticed my change so one day; she suddenly came over to talk to me. I lamented to her, pouring out my sorrow and bitterness for the world. Just then, she spoke.

“Sis, do you know that you have changed?” she said.

“What? Me? No! Of course not. How could I possibly have changed? Why are you saying this?” I exclaimed.

“You used to be so happy. Now, all you do is compare your grades and complain.” She said. “Everyone wants to be good in their studies, sis, but you’ve taken it to a whole new level. What you’re doing is drifting you apart from perfection, not getting you closer to it.”

Her words had a really great impact on me. I realized that all I had been doing to make myself think what I should be had all been wrong. I mean, it is not wrong to strive for perfection, but along the way, I should realize what I had been doing wrong and make changes. I should treat everything as lessons and stepping stones to perfection, not competitions with others. I should also learn to accept “defeat” by others. Like the famous general George Patton says, “If a man does his best, what else is there?” That means we should all improve little by little every time we do something. Everything we do is stepping stones to perfection. This I believe.

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